

Hunt Plan

TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan

I. Introduction

Although archeological evidence suggests that elk may have been fairly widespread in eastern Washington, elk appear to have been eliminated by the time of Euro-American settlement. Elk reintroductions in the early 1900s resulted in expanding herds throughout much of the forested portions of eastern Washington. Elk were first observed on Turnbull Refuge in the late 1950s. It wasn't until the mid 1980's though that a herd established itself in the area. In the twenty plus years since elk were first reestablished in this area the herd has grown annually. A survey conducted in 2008 found over 300 elk on and in the vicinity of the refuge. The refuge has become disproportionately important to the elk as security cover during the fall hunting season. As a result there has been the negative impact of heavy browsing of young aspen and other deciduous shrubs and trees on the refuge. Refuge neighbors have complained of elk damage to their hay, other agricultural crops, fences and ornamental shrubs. Hunting is one of the six priority refuge public uses identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (NWRISA) of 1997. Because of these reasons plus interest from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and other hunting advocates refuge staff decided to propose a special permit elk hunt in the Turnbull NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). A youth waterfowl hunt was also proposed.

The benefits of an annual, limited-entry hunt for elk include providing recreation, population management of the elk sub-herd that uses the refuge, and reduced impacts by elk on aspen and associated shrubs. All of these benefits are consistent with the Refuge Vision and Goals. In addition, an annual limited entry hunt contributes to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife goal for the Hangman Creek sub-herd of the Selkirk elk population, i.e. "Maintain elk numbers that are compatible with local agriculture and suburban expansion."

Hunting, along with other priority public uses of the Refuge System, will also be considered on any newly acquired lands.

About the Refuge

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is located on the eastern edge of the Columbia Basin in the Channeled Scablands region of Spokane County in eastern Washington. The Refuge is located within a globally unique geological area known as the Channeled Scablands, created by massive scouring from Ice Age floods 15,000 years ago. An extensive complex of deep permanent sloughs, semi-permanent potholes and seasonal wetlands formed in the depressions left in the scoured landscape, while soils only centimeters thick on upland sites, support primarily ponderosa pine intermixed with grasslands (steppe) and exposed basalt cliffs. Aspen is scattered throughout the area. The juxtaposition of all these contrasting habitats in such close proximity is unique to the Channeled Scablands and creates conditions of exceptional wildlife and plant diversity.

Prior to settlement, ducks, geese, and other water birds nested in the area in large numbers. Many waterfowl also used the productive marshes and lakes during the spring and fall migrations. Because of its unique resources, this area was also important to local indigenous cultures. The Northern Plateau peoples frequented this vicinity in spring to dig the roots of camas, bitterroot, wild onion and numerous species of lomatium, and to gather waterfowl eggs. Pioneers arrived in the late 1800s and rapidly began altering the landscape. Many of the marshes were drained to expand crop areas for hay. By the late 1920s few wetlands remained; instead a network of drainage ditches became a common landscape feature. In addition, as in most developing communities, timber was harvested, native plant communities were grazed by livestock, exotic plants were introduced, and fire, a natural part of the ecosystem, was suppressed. The wildlife values of the area would have been seriously compromised if it had not been for the failure of the drained lakebeds to produce crops.

The Refuge was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937, through Executive Order 7681, as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Local activists, sportsmen, and naturalists were instrumental in obtaining the area's designation as a National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge was named after early settler Cyrus Turnbull, who built a cabin on the north end of Turnbull Slough and lived there with his wife and children from 1880 to 1886.

The goals of the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge are:

- 1 Contribute to protection of local watersheds so as to maintain adequate water quality and quantity for native Refuge wetland species.
- 2 Provide habitat conditions essential to the conservation of birds and other wildlife within a variety of wetland complexes.
- 3 Restore Refuge aspen and ponderosa forest to a natural distribution of stand structural and successional stages to benefit forest-dependent wildlife.
- 4 Protect and restore the natural distribution and diversity of grassland and shrub steppe habitats to benefit wildlife.
- 5 Support the conservation of threatened and endangered species in their natural ecosystems.
- 6 Support the maintenance of biologically effective landscape linkages and

corridors between the Refuge and other intact areas of vegetation zones representative of this ecoregion.

- 7 Foster appreciation of and support for the Refuge and the Channeled Scablands ecosystem through quality environmental education, interpretation, wildlife-dependent recreation, and outreach compatible with the Refuge purposes and mission.
- 8 Encourage and support research that substantially contributes to our understanding of the Channeled Scablands ecosystem.

II. Conformance with Statutory Authorities

Any use of the Refuge must be compatible with resource protection and conform to applicable laws, regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) policies. Recreational use, in this case hunting, is allowed under the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460K, amended), which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries and other conservation areas for recreational use.

The Refuge Recreation Act requires that:

- 1) Any recreational use permitted will not interfere with the primary purpose for which the refuge was established; and
- 2) Funds are available for the development, operation and maintenance of the permitted forms of recreation.

Likewise, statutory authority for FWS management and associated habitat/wildlife management planning on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) is derived from the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (NWRSA) provided a mission for the NWRS and clear standards for its management, use, planning and growth. The National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act recognizes that wildlife-dependent recreational uses - including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, when determined to be compatible with the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of the refuge—are legitimate and appropriate public uses of national wildlife refuges. Sections 5(c) and (d) of the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act states “compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority general public uses of the NWRS and shall receive priority consideration in planning and management; and when the Secretary [of the Interior] determines that a proposed wildlife-dependent recreational use is a compatible use within a refuge, that activity should be facilitated, subject to such restrictions or regulations as may be necessary, reasonable, and appropriate.” The term compatible use is defined as a wildlife-dependent recreational use or any other use of a refuge that, in the sound professional judgment of the Director, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the System or the purposes of the Refuge. The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service’s Final Compatibility Policy Pursuant to the Act delegates the responsibility of determining compatibility to the Refuge Manager with concurrence by the Refuge Supervisor. See Appendix A for the Refuge Manager’s Compatibility Determinations in regards to elk and waterfowl hunting on Turnbull NWR.

The purposes for which Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge was established are as follows:

- 1 "...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife..." (Executive Order 7681, dated July 30, 1937)
- 2 "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." (16 U.S.C. 715d Migratory Bird Conservation Act)
- 3 "...suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species..." (16 U.S.C. 460k-1) and "...the Secretary...may accept and use...real... property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors..." (16 U.S.C. 460k-2 and Refuge Recreation Act 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4, as amended).
- 4 "...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources..." (16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4)) "...for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude..." (16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956).

III. Statement of Refuge Objectives

The Refuge completed a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) in 2007 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, March 2007). The Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan outlines goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. In the CCP the FWS proposed opening the Refuge to limited permit elk hunting and a 2-day youth waterfowl hunt. Compatibility Determinations (Appendix A) were completed for both hunts.

For a complete review of all Refuge management goals and objectives, as well as the environmental assessment (EA), see <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning> for Turnbull's Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan. This hunt plan is considered a "step-down" management plan of the 2007 CCP.

1. Refuge Objectives Pertinent to Hunt Programs

The hunting program would be conducted to meet refuge objectives for providing hunting opportunities, managing target species and assisting the WDFW with achieving and maintaining State game population objectives. The FWS believes these objectives will maintain healthy game populations at levels that will protect the native fish, wildlife, plants and habitats identified in the Turnbull NWR CCP, thereby maintaining the biological integrity, diversity and environmental health of the Refuge. This hunting program also supports the mandate of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act that refuges provide for priority public uses, including hunting, where compatible. Compatibility determinations are available for review. The objectives of the hunt are:

- 1 Initiate a safe, limited entry (6-8 hunting sites), high quality, low-impact permit youth waterfowl hunt on Upper Turnbull Slough (for 6-16 youths) during the annual State youth hunt weekend in September. Emphasize education, offering a waterfowl identification or natural history class for youths participating in the hunt.
- 2 In cooperation with the State, undertake actions to reduce elk damage to Refuge habitats. In particular, ensure that damage to Refuge aspen groves does not exceed levels above which aspen stands cannot be regenerated or sustained.
- 3 In cooperation with the State, initiate an annual, safe, high quality, walk-in, limited-entry permit elk hunting program in specified portions of the Refuge. Establish annually the number of permits that will be allowed based on habitat response to reduced numbers of elk.

IV. Assessment

The Hunt Plan is consistent with the purposes of the Refuge and sound wildlife management principals. The hunt will implement user and administrative stipulations specified in the Elk Hunting Compatibility Determination. After five years the elk hunting and youth waterfowl hunting program will be thoroughly evaluated to determine if the refuge is meeting its objectives. If there have been no unacceptable impacts to other wildlife populations or to other public use programs, the hunting programs would be continued. At that time the FWS will also consider adding additional hunting areas if appropriate including any newly acquired refuge lands that might support hunting activity. Any reductions in or other changes to the hunt program would be made after that evaluation as well.

A. Are wildlife populations present in numbers sufficient to sustain optimum population levels for priority refuge objectives other than hunting?

Hunting programs need to be based on healthy, sustainable populations of the species hunted. On the Refuge, only Rocky Mountain elk and coots, ducks, and geese will be hunted. A decision to hunt wild turkey could be made in the future following additional research on turkey ecology and better estimates of population size and trends. No recreational or commercial trapping is allowed on the Refuge.

1. Status of Rocky Mountain Elk on the Refuge

Rocky Mountain elk were first observed on the Refuge in the late 1950's. Although increasing numbers were observed on the Refuge and in most of southern Spokane County since their first appearance, dramatic increases did not occur until the mid 1980's. By the late 1980's, the elk population in the Refuge vicinity was estimated at between 60 to 80 animals, based primarily on incidental observations. As the elk population grew in size so did interest in its management. In 1993, the elk of southern Spokane County were designated the Hangman Creek sub-herd by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and managed as part of the Selkirk herd of northeastern Washington.

The first aerial survey of the Hangman Creek sub-herd population was conducted during the spring of 1993. It was a mark-recapture survey using the paintball method. The population size was estimated at 271-384 (95 percent confidence interval) with 60 elk observed on the Refuge. Additional aerial surveys were conducted in ensuing years. These surveys indicated a growing population with high productivity. During an aerial survey conducted by the State in 1997, 93 elk were observed on the Refuge and the estimated population for the sub-herd was between 115 and 219 animals (95 percent confidence interval). This population decrease for the entire sub-herd is likely the result of the any-bull strategy and offering either-sex and antlerless hunts with extended seasons for muzzle loaders and Master Hunters. The most current survey data from 2008 found 327 elk on or near the Refuge (Ferguson 2008).

Table 1. Total Elk observed from aerial surveys at and around Turnbull NWR.

Year	Total	Cows	Calves	Spikes	Rag horns	Adult	Unclassified
						Male	
2004	354	211	106	22	11	3	0
2006	369	207	113	26	12	11	0
2007*	268	140	78	26	13	11	0
2008	327	145	121	31	12	18	0

* Approximately 100 elk were observed south of the refuge during this survey.

Table 2. Composition counts and bull: cow: calf ratios from aerial surveys at and around Turnbull NWR.

Year	Bulls	Cows	Calves	Ratio: 100 Cows		
				Bulls:	Cows	:Calves
2004	36	211	106	17	100	50
2006	49	207	113	24	100	55
2007	50	140	78	36	100	56
2008	61	145	121	42	100	83

This growing elk population is adequate to provide high quality hunting opportunities while maintaining elk on the refuge for other priority public uses. Opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography may actually increase as a result of elk being pushed out of the hunting area into adjacent refuge areas closed to hunting.

2. Status of Waterfowl (Ducks, Geese and Coots)

There is relatively low use of the Refuge and vicinity by waterfowl in the fall. Fall waterfowl populations on the Refuge are fairly irregular as a result of periodic drought and early freeze up that limits the availability of open water. In addition, waterfowl numbers are considerably lower than occurred in this area historically. This is a result of the extensive drainage of many of the permanent and semi-permanent wetlands (70% of historic wetlands in the area have been drained) as well as the development of irrigated agriculture in the arid steppe of Columbia Basin

to the west made possible by Coulee Dam (Columbia Basin Irrigation Project). These changes have shifted much of the fall migration to the farm fields, reservoirs and wasteways of the lower basin. Species that have been observed on the Refuge in September include Canada geese, mallard, pintail, American wigeon, gadwall, green-winged teal, ruddy duck, wood duck, bufflehead, redhead and American coot.

When wetland and weather conditions result in good fall migration habitat, a portion of the southern migration still utilizes the restored wetlands of the Refuge and un-drained deeper water habitats in the refuge vicinity. Refuge waterfowl counts indicate that numbers peak in mid-October in most years. During these good years, peak mallard counts range from 10,000 to 25,000 birds in late October and represent 75% of the fall waterfowl populations. Other duck species peak earlier in October. By mid to late November, Refuge wetlands normally freeze resulting in a forced emigration of most waterfowl with the exception of smaller populations of goldeneye, Canada geese and a few hardy mallards. This relatively narrow window of habitat availability limits waterfowl hunting opportunities in this area.

This population size is adequate to provide opportunities for hunter success during a 2-day youth hunt in late September while maintaining adequate numbers of waterfowl to meet other public use objectives.

B. Is there competition for habitat between target species and other wildlife?

Elk

Research by WDFW and Eastern Washington University indicated that the Refuge is important to the local elk population as a security zone. As a result, there has been heavy browsing of young aspen and other deciduous shrubs and trees on the Refuge. In addition, several neighbors have complained of elk damage to their hay, other agricultural crops, fences, and ornamental shrubs since the early 1990s and feel that the Refuge should take a more active role in limiting elk numbers. Since 1992, two claims have been paid by the State for elk damage to agricultural crops. Complaints have declined since 1999 after several local landowners began leasing their lands for hunting.

Aspen stands typically regenerate themselves after disturbance by producing new shoots called suckers. A high level of elk browse on an aspen stand can ultimately impede the stand's capacity to regenerate and grow into a mature stand. Current literature was reviewed to investigate the issue of how much elk use on aspen is sustainable or in other words, does not impede a stand's regeneration and capacity to grow into a mature stand. A set of management recommendations for regenerating aspen stands, published by Bates et al. (2002) indicates that 4000-5000 well-spaced suckers per acre at age two is adequate for regenerating the stand, though a higher number of suckers per acre is desirable for unexpected losses from disease or injury. Other authors, including Debye (1985) and Campbell et al. (2001) have recommended retaining at least 500 stems per acre at year 6 or when the aspen clone is approximately 2.5 meters tall. The Refuge maintains twelve study plots in aspen habitat. Albrecht (2003) investigated aspen regeneration under variable elk use on the Refuge and discovered that aspen in areas where elk concentrate are much more intensively browsed. Specifically, he discovered that in areas

categorized as "low-use" by elk, less than 20% of the stems less than 2.5 meters tall received moderate to high intensity browsing. This appeared to be an acceptable level since these stands were showing recruitment of an adequate number of stems per acre. Management that reduces elk densities during the winter by either removal or redistribution can decrease browsing intensity enough to allow aspen escapement and height growth beyond the reach of elk. Hunting can be an effective elk population management strategy. Currently there are limited public elk hunting opportunities in the Refuge vicinity.

Strategies to reduce elk browse damage on refuge aspen communities include identifying a sound indicator for measuring the damage to aspen habitats. Refuge staff will investigate use of percent of current annual growth (CAG) browsed or percent of twigs browsed, using the findings of Albrecht's study (2003) as a baseline. Aspen habitats will be monitored annually using established indicators. Refuge staff will also continue discussions with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to share elk information, including herd population estimates, reports of on-refuge and off-refuge damage, and viable methods for reducing elk numbers. Although hunting is our preferred method to reduce elk populations, if hunting is unsuccessful in achieving refuge habitat objectives, a variety of tools could be considered to reduce elk population numbers or damage, including relocation, implant of reproduction inhibiting chemicals, working with private landowners, and other methods. Refuge staff will work with WFWD to monitor and track seasonal shifts in elk populations and distribution on Refuge and will encourage Eastern Washington University to continue supporting Master's level theses dealing with elk/aspen interactions.

By reducing elk damage to refuge aspen habitats and the consequent restoration of healthy stands of aspen other refuge wildlife species such as ruffed grouse and migratory songbirds utilizing this habitat will benefit. Aspen habitats on the refuge provide important foraging and nesting habitat for at least 65 neo-tropical migrant bird species, white tail deer and bats. Aspen is the second most preferred roosting habitat for big brown bats, and important foraging habitat for all bat species that utilize the refuge.

The hunt level will be tied to aspen damage rather than population levels for four reasons: 1) the relationship between aspen damage and elk use on Turnbull NWR has been documented by a recent study by Albrecht (2003); 2) a specific population objective for the Hangman sub-herd has not been defined; 3) the Refuge land area that could accommodate hunting is too small to make a major impact on the sub-herd populations through hunting alone and 4) elk move off and on the Refuge easily and population counts are inherently subject to variation and potentially inaccurate conclusions.

Waterfowl

The limiting factor is not so much competition with other wildlife species but the amount of fall waterfowl habitat available in the area of Turnbull Refuge. Within the upper reaches of the Channeled Scablands where the Refuge is located, fall waterfowl habitat is very limited due to extensive drainage of the large, historically permanent wetland sloughs in the early 1900s. Over 70 percent of the wetlands in this area have been drained. The remaining fall habitat occurs on the Refuge and on several deepwater lakes in the vicinity of the Refuge. These off-Refuge lakes receive intense pressure from the recreating public, primarily anglers, but also from a few

waterfowl hunters where hunting is allowed.

As a result of the extensive drainage of fall migration habitat in the Refuge vicinity and extensive development of irrigation waste-ways and agriculture in the central Columbia Basin, much of the fall waterfowl migration has shifted west of the Refuge. Increases in waterfowl use of the Refuge in the fall during above average precipitation years, however, indicate that restoration of fall migration habitat will likely increase waterfowl populations in this area.

Although nineteen percent of the Refuge is wetlands, many of these wetlands are dry by fall, because of their naturally shallow profiles. Those 942 acres that still contain water at the onset of waterfowl hunting season are usually open less than one month before freezing. Opening the Refuge to a waterfowl hunt for the one month period before freeze-up could result in decreased use of this habitat by waterfowl. The Service believes, however, that a limited youth hunt, to occur on one weekend (usually in September) per year, can be accommodated and will help the Refuge facilitate hunting as a priority use, as required under the NWRSA. The Refuge proposes land conservation as a key element of the CCP. These land conservation actions should result in a significant amount of additional wetland habitat protected and restored. If the Refuge can acquire or protect additional fall wetland habitat outside the current boundaries, opening additional acres to waterfowl hunting could be considered.

C. Are there unacceptable levels of predation by target species on other wildlife forms?

There are no unacceptable levels of predation on other wildlife forms by either elk or waterfowl on Turnbull Refuge.

V. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas of the refuge that support populations of the target species

The elk herd currently ranges throughout the refuge. Elk tend to concentrate in the Closed Areas of the refuge avoiding the general public use area during daylight hours.

Waterfowl utilize the entire refuge complex of wetland basins. Fall waterfowl use tends to be on the larger bodies of water since many of the seasonal and smaller wetlands are dry or near dry in the fall. In good water years fall concentrations of waterfowl can be observed on Long Lake, Upper and Lower Turnbull Sloughs, McDowell Lake, West Tritt, Kepple Lake and the Pine Lake chain near headquarters.

B. Areas to be opened to the public

As proposed in the CCP elk hunting will occur in the Southwest (SW), Northeast (NE) and Helm units (shaded in green in Figure 1). Waterfowl hunting will occur on north side of Upper Turnbull Slough. Additional optional elk hunting units in the Northwest (NW) and Southeast (SE) (shaded in red) will be considered in the future. See map (Figure 1)

C. Species to be taken and hunting periods

Hunting will be open for archery, muzzleloader and modern firearm elk seasons and a youth waterfowl (geese, ducks, and coots) hunt (shotgun) for two days in September. The elk hunt will be predominantly for antlerless elk with a goal of herd reduction to reduce browse intensity on refuge aspen communities. There will be no hunting offered for any other species.

Elk

A limited number of special permits will be issued for each weapon type (Table 3). Two scenarios are depicted - the first offers the minimum number of permits where hunting occurs only in the Southwest, Northeast and Helm units, whereas the second option offers the maximum number of permits and in addition to the first option's units opens the Northwest (NW) and Southeast (SE) units to hunting. Permit numbers and areas to be hunted will be based on achievement of habitat objectives that require reduction of elk damage to refuge habitats as well as consideration for public safety and herd population levels and demographics. Refuge staff will determine yearly the number of permits in cooperation with WDFW to meet refuge habitat, and public safety, as well as State elk herd objectives.

The Refuge elk hunting seasons would overlap WDFW seasons for the area including early and late muzzleloader, archery, and modern firearm (Figure 3). The FWS is also proposing a disabled hunt that would run between other State seasons.

The permitting process will limit and disperse hunters to designated refuge elk hunting units. This plan specifies types of weapons to be used in each unit in order to minimize impacts to other public uses both on the refuge and the Columbia Plateau Trail State Park, refuge operations, facilities and adjacent private residences.

Hunters will be limited to assigned designated hunting areas. Hunt access areas will be posted with a custom Hunting Area sign "Refuge Hunting Access Permit Required". Boundaries of non-hunting areas will be delineated with a custom "No Hunting Beyond this Sign" signs, and hunters will be issued maps showing specific boundaries of their hunting unit. In most cases, geographical features or improvements (wetlands and roads) physically separate the hunting areas from the non-hunting areas. The entire refuge perimeter is posted with the blue goose National Wildlife Refuge Unauthorized Entry Prohibited (boundary sign see Figure 2) and Area Beyond This Sign Closed signs.

Figure 1 – Proposed Elk and Waterfowl Hunting Areas (green proposed elk hunting areas, red possible future elk hunting areas, yellow youth waterfowl hunt)

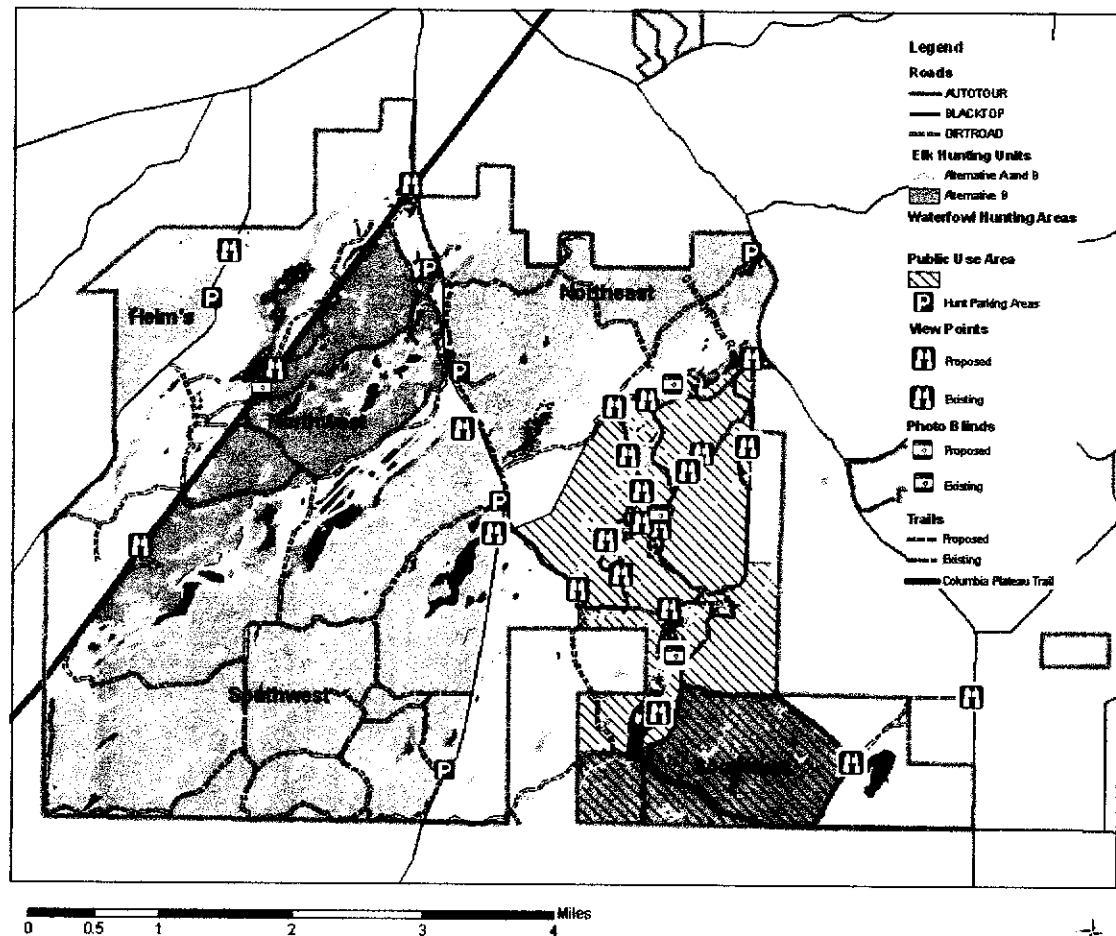


Figure 2. Refuge Boundary and Closed Area Signs

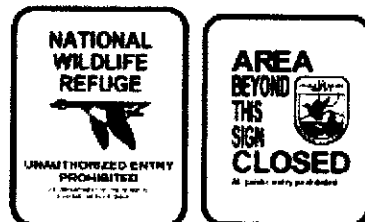


Figure 3 Turnbull Refuge Elk Season Time Line

	SEPTEMBER																														OCTOBER																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																	
Hunt Units	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																			
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Table 3 depicts the seasons and number of permits allowed in the SW, NE and Helm units as well as what would be allowed should the NW and SE unit be added in future years. All permits are for antlerless elk except where noted. Season dates are approximate and will change year to year in accordance with the WDFW seasons.

Hunt Season	Proposed # Permits Per Unit			Maximum # Permits Per Unit				
	SW	NE	Helm	SW	NE	Helm	NW	SE
Early Archery Sept 8-20	8	4	2	8	4	2	3	2
Early Muzzleloader* Oct 3-8	6	2	1	8	2	1	3	2
Disabled** Oct 10 - 18	6	0	0	6	2	1	3	2
Early Modern Firearm Oct 27 - Nov 1	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Mid Modern Firearm Nov 3 - Nov 8	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Late Modern Firearm Nov 10 - 15	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Late Muzzleloader Nov 20 - Dec 8	6	2	1	8	2	1	3	2
Modern Firearm Bull Hunt Oct 27- Nov 15	***	0	0	***	0	0	0	0
Master Hunter**** Dec 10 - 31	6	0	0	6	2	1	3	2
Totals	51	8	4	55	12	6	15	10

* Only 6 permits will be issued for the Early Muzzleloader season in the SW unit to provide flexibility to accommodate the fall prescribed burning season, hunter numbers will not exceed unit maximums.

** Only 6 permits will be issued for the Disabled Special Hunt Season in the SW unit; if a hunter is certified for Archery or Muzzleloader and chooses to use one of these weapons they could be assigned to one of the units where use of Modern Firearm is restricted.

*** The number of bull permits will be determined annually by the Project Leader in cooperation with WDFW

**** Only 6 permits total will be issued for the Master Hunter Special Hunt Season; if a hunter is certified for Archery or Muzzleloader and chooses to use one of these weapons they could be assigned to one of the units where use of Modern Firearm is restricted.

The only unit with a modern firearm season is the SW unit. Anyone using a modern firearm during the Master Hunter season would be restricted to the SW unit. There will be only 6 modern firearms Master Hunter permits allowed in the SW unit. Archery and muzzleloader will be allowed in the SW, Helm and the NE units. The disabled hunt will be hunter choice of weapon and will occur only in the SW unit, or in areas designated annually by the Refuge Manager. Should additional units be opened in order to meet the goals of herd reduction, hunters will be limited to the appropriate weapon type for the hunt unit.

The modern firearm season will be split into an early, mid and late season in order to maximize the number of modern firearm hunters. Modern firearm hunters tend to be more successful than archery at harvesting an animal. Modern firearm hunters will also push/move the elk around more, thus reducing damage and increasing chance of harvest off the refuge.

One or more bull permits will be available to hunters during the modern firearm season. The number of bull permits will be determined annually by the Project Leader in cooperation with WDFW. If additional bull permits are added in the future, the same number of antlerless permits will be reduced so not to exceed maximum number of permits allowed for any specific unit. This will ensure hunter density is not exceeded.

There will be 14 permits in the SW, NE and Helm units for the Archery season which will run concurrent with the State season. Fourteen permits is a departure (change) from the CCP proposed 6 to 10 permits per each season which was a general range of permits suggested for all hunts. The FWS believes the area can safely support more archery hunters than previously proposed.

Refuge seasons will vary from seasons outside the Refuge by at least one day in order to allow hunters a scouting day prior to the opening day of their season.

The refuge manager will determine how the individual permit holders are distributed across the units. This may be done by a first come first serve basis or a drawing.

Waterfowl

In the two-day youth waterfowl hunt which will run concurrently with the State youth waterfowl hunt in late September only ducks, geese and coots will be hunted. Waterfowl species most likely to be taken include Canada goose, mallard, gadwall, northern pintail, American wigeon, green-winged teal, redhead, ringed-necked duck, wood duck and American coot. There will be no mourning dove, band-tailed pigeon or snipe hunting on the refuge. Hunters will follow the

State regulations in addition to any special refuge specific regulations published in the federal register. Hunters should be aware of any annual State waterfowl species restrictions prior to hunting.

There will be a limited number of hunting access permits issued by the Refuge for the youth waterfowl hunt. Depending upon water conditions in Turnbull Slough, there will be 6-8 hunting sites available, including a disabled access site once it is developed. Two youths (under age 16) and an accompanying non-hunting adult (at least 18 years of age) will be allowed at each site. This will allow for a range of 6-16 youth hunters per day in any one year. Refuge access permits will be issued after a public drawing of applicants.

Hunting areas will be spaced at least 300 yards apart. Figure 4 shows waterfowl hunting locations. Hunters will be required to hunt within 50 yards of the marked hunting sites. One site, located on the west end of the lake near the Upper Turnbull Slough water control structure and boat ramp, will be developed for disabled access

The youth waterfowl hunt area was selected from the limited supply of fall flooded wetland areas to minimize conflicts with other priority public uses. Total flooded Refuge wetland area during fall waterfowl hunting season is estimated at 942 acres so the area available for waterfowl hunting represents about 14.8% of the Refuge fall wetland habitat base.

D. Justification for permit

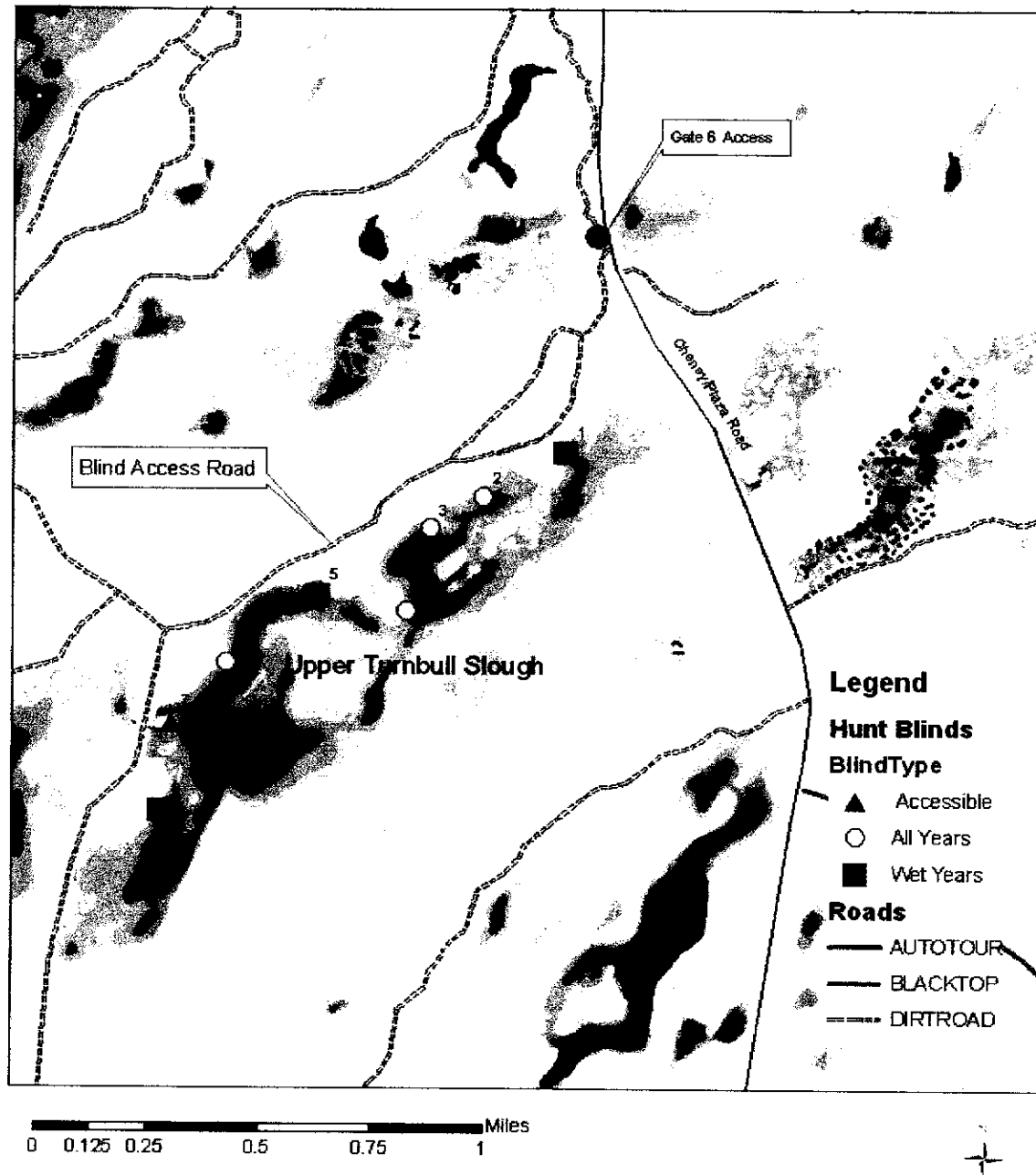
By utilizing a permit process, a controlled quality limited entry elk and youth waterfowl hunt can be provided. An established number of permits will allow desired low hunter density. For the youth waterfowl hunt our objective is to space hunters at 300 yards or more to provide uncrowded and safe hunting conditions. For the elk hunt a safe, uncrowded condition means less than 2 hunters per square mile. Our objective is a quality hunt with no firearm related injuries.

The fee for the refuge recreation access permit required by hunters will help offset administrative costs of running the hunt. Youth hunters will have their fee waived (less than 16 years of age).

E. Procedures for consultation and coordination with WFWD

FWS staff will coordinate through an annual meeting with regional WFWD staff on the number of permits, and seasons. The two staffs will also coordinate on fall aerial elk surveys. WFWD will publish information on the refuge elk hunt annually in the Big Game regulations.

Figure 4 Waterfowl hunting locations on Upper Turnbull Slough



F. Methods of control and enforcement

An effectively managed hunt will require State law enforcement assistance. Refuge and Washington State Fish and Wildlife officers will patrol to ensure hunters are complying with all regulations and restrictions. The FWS anticipates having an INWR Complex Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) in place by the 2009 hunting season. Currently the FWS relies on a Zone LEO who has responsibilities throughout eastern Washington and northern Idaho who can schedule Officers from other refuges to assist with the hunt.

G. Funding and Staffing Requirements for the Hunt

Stationing a full time law enforcement officer at Turnbull would provide the best situation for developing hunting opportunities here. Implementation of the Inland Complex (including Turnbull, Kootenai and Little Pend Oreille) will add a Complex Law Enforcement Officer, stationed at Turnbull who will be responsible for law enforcement on all three refuges. In the absence of a full time officer, the Refuge will require law enforcement assistance from other Refuges in the region. Other positions that could meet some of the administrative needs of this hunting program include a Refuge Operations Specialist and Turnbull Park Ranger. The existing maintenance staff would take on the maintenance of hunting facilities. Biological staff will monitor aspen conditions and elk and waterfowl populations. Currently monitoring is accomplished by one wildlife biologist, a seasonal AmeriCorps intern, volunteers and contract work or partnering with WFWD (helicopter elk survey). The CCP proposes additional biological staff. Managers will fill in as necessary to implement these hunting programs.

Facilities for these two hunts would be minimal. No permanent blinds will be provided for the waterfowl hunt. Hunters can utilize the cattail edge of Upper Turnbull Slough as natural cover. Hunting sites will be marked by a permanent post and sign with trail markers leading hunters to their hunting sites.

Development of the disabled waterfowl hunting site will require funds to establish an accessible trail to the blind site. For the elk hunt a small rough parking area will be constructed at Gate 7, 9, 12 on Cheney Plaza Road & Gate 18 on Cheney Spangle Road and one at Gate H-1b on Mullinix Road. Parking areas would consist of a barbed wire perimeter and a second interior gate. Costs for building these parking areas will be minimal. The FWS will purchase and install "No Hunting Zone" signs along edges of the designated hunting areas and develop a hunting brochure or flyer with maps. Estimated costs of salary, materials, and contracts are shown in Table 4. Elk hunters will be assessed an access fee to help offset hunting program costs. Youth hunter access fee will be waived.

Table 4 - Estimated Initial and Annual Hunt Program Cost.

	INITIAL COSTS		ANNUAL COSTS	
Activity	Staff Hours	Hunt Costs	Staff Hours	Hunt Costs
Law Enforcement	40	\$1200	400	\$12000
Planning	240	\$7200	40	\$1200
Public Information & Meetings Includes printing flyers	40	\$3200	56	\$3700
Permit Administration	40	\$1200	80	\$2400
Postage	8	\$ 400	4	\$ 250
Supplies	2	\$300	2	\$ 300
Facility Development (Parking & Signs)	80	\$5000	0	0
Disabled Hunter Access Development	80	\$10,000	0	0
Facility Maintenance	0	0	16	\$ 750
Biological Monitoring (includes aerial survey)	100	\$6000	100	\$6000
Total	582	\$34500	578	\$26600

VI. Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts with Other Management Objectives

A. Biological Conflicts (see Appendix C for Section 7 consultation)

1. Threatened and Endangered Species

The following federally listed or federal candidate species have been documented on the Refuge or its surrounding landscape — water howellia (threatened), and Spalding's silene (threatened). In accordance with the FWS's Endangered Species Management Policy (7 RM 2), an analysis was conducted of recreational hunting impacts.

a. Spalding's silene, *Silene spaldingii*

Potential threats to Spalding's silene from elk hunting are direct impact to populations and habitat associated with trampling of vegetation by foot travel and potential introduction of exotic species. Although elk hunting will be free roam, it will involve very few hunters and will occur during the species' dormant season minimizing any potential impact from trampling. The hunting seasons occur during a period of plant dormancy which makes any adverse impact to this plant species unlikely. Effects would be insignificant.

b. Water howellia, *Howellia aquatilis*

Because none of the hunting activity will take place near known occurrences of water howellia, or occur at such levels that effects would be insignificant, hunting is not likely to adversely affect this species.

c. Ute ladies'-tresses

This species has not been documented on the refuge. Suitable habitat may occur on the refuge, but it is generally dominated by reed canarygrass. It is unlikely to occur on the Refuge. Because of its absence from the Refuge, no direct or indirect effects are expected to this species or its habitat.

2. Other Wildlife and Habitats

a. Rocky Mountain Elk

Annual hunting, if allowed in the same area each year, may cause elk to begin using the remaining no-shooting zones, to a great degree, especially the Public Use Area. This portion of the Refuge has historically received low elk use due to the relatively greater level of human disturbance. Aspen in this area has shown little impact from elk and regeneration typically reaches a height of eight feet within seven to eight years.

Since disturbance associated with hunting has a greater influence on elk behavior than other public uses (Skovlin 1982), elk will likely begin to habituate to the level of non-

hunting related human disturbance in the no-shooting areas (Ward 1973). Increased density of elk in the no-shooting areas may occur, increasing the intensity of aspen browsing, and off-setting gains made in the hunting zones.

b. Waterfowl

The direct effect of hunting on waterfowl is mortality, wounding, and disturbance. A youth waterfowl hunting program at Turnbull is not expected to have a major effect on Refuge waterfowl populations. The most likely effect would be a temporary shift in waterfowl populations away from hunted areas to non-hunted areas on the Refuge. Total fall wetland habitat available to waterfowl at the present time is estimated at 942 acres. Under the CCP, approximately 14.8% of the existing fall Refuge wetland base will be open to waterfowl hunting. Hunters will be limited to 25 shells of non-toxic shot per day per hunter. Waterfowl hunting has very few if any positive effects on waterfowl and other birds but when practiced ethically has given many hunters an appreciation of wildlife and a better understanding of the importance of conserving their habitat. The FWS will provide a waterfowl identification course prior to the hunt which will also help youths develop a conservation ethic. This ultimately contributes to the Refuge System mission. At Turnbull NWR, efforts will be made to ensure that hunting impacts will be minimal, by restricting the hunt to a two day youth, and requiring hunting from a limited number of fixed spaced hunting sites.

c. Upland habitats and associated wildlife

Off-trail use associated with proposed hunting programs would have minimal to no impact on upland habitat (ponderosa pine and steppe) or associated wildlife because the hunting programs would involve a small number of widely dispersed individuals and occur outside of the breeding and growing seasons for most species.

B. Public Use Conflicts

Turnbull NWR has a 3180-acre public use area where the general public can observe and photograph wildlife, drive the 5-mile auto tour, or walk several trails. Along these trails and auto tour the FWS plans to place interpretive signs to tell the story of the refuge, its habitats, and wildlife. The FWS operates an environmental education classroom and four outdoor environmental learning sites on the refuge. Up to 35,000-40,000 people visit annually, including 5000-8000 school children.

Areas of the Refuge have been selected that will separate hunters from general visitors. The two major visitor use areas available for the non-hunting public (Visitor Use Area and Columbia Plateau Trail) will continue to be closed to hunting. Although there will be archery and muzzleloader hunting adjacent to the public use area, the areas designated for modern firearm will be separated from the public use area and the Columbia Plateau Trail by at least a quarter mile (Figure 1). The Turnbull Sloughs will provide a buffer from the modern firearm hunt in the SW unit for most of the Columbia Plateau Trail. A buffer around Reeves Lake and Kepple Lake will further separate muzzleloader and archery hunters in the NE unit from the general public use

area. If future muzzleloader or archery hunting is opened in the NW or SE units further warnings to the public using the general public use area or Columbia Plateau Trail will be required. The hunt units will be closed to all other public uses.

There should be no conflicts between the hunt and other public uses. If the SE unit (a part on the general public use area) were opened in the future for hunting that unit would be closed to general public use during the hunt.

C. Administrative Conflicts

Existing staff (administrative, biological, law enforcement, and visitor services) and funding available to administer the proposed hunt is limited. Outreach about the new hunting programs will require additional resources or reprogramming of existing resources.

The hunt program has the potential to conflict with some of the normal management, maintenance and biological monitoring activities that will continue despite the hunting activity that might be occurring in the same vicinity. Safety briefings for staff working in hunt areas will make them aware of hunting times and locations. Hunter orange vests and/or hats will be issued to all employees. Hunters will be warned of refuge activities that might be occurring in the hunt units. These measures will ensure the safety of refuge staff and Service authorized agents and allows the completion of refuge management activities as well as other refuge uses. However, the project leader has the discretion to close areas to hunting when necessary for the protection of refuge staff and authorized agents who are conducting refuge management activities or for the safety of hunters who could be at risk from refuge management activities (e.g., prescribed fire). As such there will be no administrative conflicts.

Some of the activities that might occur concurrently with the hunts include:

Wetland/Riparian Restoration

Wetland and riparian restoration activities may be occurring concurrent with hunting seasons. Fall and winter months often provide the best conditions for wetland restoration work.

Forest Restoration Activities

During years when forestry or prescribed fire activities overlap hunting seasons, the FWS will try to separate hunters from these activities or, at least, warn hunters of any management activity in their hunt area. Forest management (thinning/burning) activities could be conducted by contract workers or refuge staff.

Habitat and Wildlife Monitoring

Biweekly waterfowl surveys, water level monitoring, timber cruises or other habitat surveys may occur during hunting seasons.

Research Activities

Research activities on the refuge seldom extend into the fall hunting season and those that do will be separated them from the hunting areas when possible. The two Research Natural Areas and the area around the Turnbull Laboratory for Ecological Studies will be closed to hunting.

Any researcher using the refuge during the hunting season will be encouraged to use these areas and the general public use area.

Maintenance Activities

Fall maintenance activities include maintaining fences, gates, signs, water control structures, and roads and clearing downed trees from roads or fences.

VII. Conduct of the Hunting Program

There will be a one page brochure/flyer with map and explanation of hunting regulations for each of the Turnbull Refuge hunts (elk and youth waterfowl). Each hunter will receive a flyer/map when they pick up their refuge hunting access permit. National Wildlife Refuge hunting program regulations and Special Regulations specific to Turnbull Refuge will be posted in 50 CFR. National Wildlife Refuge hunting program regulations are described in 50CFR 32.2. Hunters should familiarize themselves with the appropriate Code of Federal Regulations. Hunters should also be familiar with regulations as listed in the State Big Game Regulations and State Waterfowl Regulations pamphlets put out by WFWD.

A. Refuge Specific Hunting Regulations

In addition to annually published state regulations, the following are refuge-specific regulations for the waterfowl and elk hunts on the refuge:

1. Regulations Common to All Species

- Each hunter will secure and possess the required State licenses, tags, stamps, or permits.
- Each person will comply with the applicable provisions of state and federal laws as well as hunting regulations of the State of Washington.
- All hunters drawn for a hunt on Turnbull will be required to get a Refuge hunter access permit from the Refuge Manager. Refuge hunting access permits are non-transferable. Permit will name individuals that can enter the Refuge to hunt or accompany the hunter.
- Each person will comply with the terms and conditions of access to the Refuge (Access Permit)
- Only those firearms identified for that particular hunting season are allowed. Air guns and all handguns are prohibited for hunting on the Refuge.
- The use of nails, wire, screws or bolts to secure a stand to a tree or hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been driven to support a hunter is prohibited.
- Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
- Vehicles must use existing open roads and designated parking areas to access hunting sites. A parking permit will be displayed on the dash of the vehicle while hunting. No ATVs are allowed on the refuge.
- No overnight parking is allowed.
- All hunting will be conducted on foot, except for disabled hunters, who must follow State disabled hunter regulations.

- No trapping or falconry is allowed.
- It is unlawful to use or possess alcoholic beverages or drugs while hunting. Individuals under any influence of alcohol or drugs are prohibited within the Refuge.
- Possession of loaded firearms or a bow with the arrow notched within any safety zone or Refuge Closed Area is prohibited.

2. Elk Hunting Regulations Specific to Turnbull NWR

- We only allow authorized vehicles on designated routes of travel and require hunters to park in designated parking areas. No ATVs or ORVs are allowed.
- Only special permit holders for disabled hunts will be allowed authorized vehicular access to their hunt unit. We require all other hunters to park in designated parking areas.
- Hunters can use non-motorized carts to help with retrieval of their elk.
- One weaponless person may assist hunters during elk retrieval only. This person is required to remain with the Hunter at all times during retrieval.
- Elk hunters may enter the Refuge no earlier than two hours before shooting time and will be allowed up to five hours after sunset to retrieve their elk. Hunters needing additional time for retrieval must notify Refuge staff or a state Fish and Wildlife Officer prior to a time extension. Elk hunting hours are ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.
- Hunters who would an elk that moves outside the hunt unit must be accompanied by Refuge staff or by a state Fish and Wildlife Officer during retrieval in Closed Areas.
- Hunters must use non-toxic ammunition or remove or bury the digestive tract remains of harvested animals.
- Hunters must possess and carry a signed hunt permit when hunting.
- No dogs allowed.
- Shooting into any safety zone or Closed Area is prohibited. We prohibit shooting from or into any safety zone or Closed Area.
- No Hunting Safety Zones of 500 feet are in effect around existing buildings.
- Hunter orange is required during the modern firearm season.

3. Waterfowl Hunting Regulations Specific to Turnbull NWR

- The only waterfowl hunting will occur during the State's Youth Migratory Bird Hunt.
- Waterfowl hunting will occur only within 50 yards of designated hunting areas on the north side of Upper Turnbull Slough.
- Access to the waterfowl hunting area on Upper Turnbull Slough will be through Gate 6. There will be no driving off established roads. Hunting access areas will be posted by number along the Upper Turnbull Road. Access to lakeshore hunting areas from this posted site will be by foot only. No off-road access will be allowed for motorized vehicles. No ATVs or ORVs are allowed.
- Youth hunters will be allowed to use retrieval dogs. Hunting dogs must be under

hunter or accompanying adult control at all times. Because footing on the lake subsurface will be saturated and not conducive to walking to retrieve downed birds, use of waders, portable boat or dog to aid in waterfowl retrieval is encouraged. The hunter must make a reasonable effort to retrieve any crippled or killed birds. Decoys and boats must be clean of any aquatic vegetation and organisms prior to entering the Refuge.

- Hunters are allowed to bring a portable non-motorized retrieval skiff (that can be portaged by foot) should they not have a retrieval dog.
- Hunters will be allowed into the hunting area two hours prior to legal shooting hours.
- Waterfowl hunting is allowed ½ hour before sunrise to sunset. Waterfowl and decoy retrieval will be allowed for one hour past legal shooting hours.
- We prohibit shooting or discharging any firearm from, across, or along a public highway, designated route of travel, road, road shoulder, road embankment, or designated parking area.
- The construction of pit blinds and the cutting/removal of vegetation are not allowed. All blind materials, decoys and other equipment, including spent casings, must be removed following each day's hunt.
- Daily bag limit will be 7 birds with a possession limit of 14.
- Youth will be restricted to possession and use of 25 non-toxic shells per day. This includes steel, bismuth, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-matrix and tin shot types. Shot size may not exceed size T (.200 inch).
- Youth selected for the hunt will be required to obtain a refuge hunting access permit from the Refuge Manager. Youth will not be charged a fee for their refuge hunting access permit.
- Youth hunters must be familiar with federal regulations related to migratory bird hunting. These can be found in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20.

B. Anticipated public reaction to the hunt

Results of Scoping for the CCP/EA

States: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife identified the reduction of elk populations within the refuge as its primary issue, and strongly supports opening elk and youth waterfowl hunting on the Refuge.

Tribes: The Spokane Tribe is interested in receiving any elk transplants, if warranted, and expressed interest in more opportunities for tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering on Federal lands.

Public: A majority of the public opposed hunting on the Refuge early in scoping. In June 2002, the opposition was still broad; however, many people acknowledged tolerance for elk hunting if it was offered primarily for the purpose of reducing elk populations due to demonstrated aspen habitat damage. During a June 2002 workshop, most participants opposed waterfowl hunting.

Neighbors: Refuge neighbors have been vocal supporters of the proposal to offer elk hunting at the Refuge.

Comments Received During CCP/EA Public Comment Period

Elk Hunting

Thirty letters were received supporting elk hunting. Much of the commentary was qualified, supporting a limited hunt carefully controlled and managed for conservation purposes. Suggestions included changing areas designated for hunting, emphasizing a mix of bull and cow hunts, developing an archery hunt or a hunt for disabled hunters; and using other methods to manage the elk population including opening hunt areas for hiking and other public use.

Waterfowl Hunting

Public reaction to the proposed youth waterfowl hunt was evenly split between supporters and opponents. Some opponents stated that the hunt is contradictory to Refuge purposes or is not justified. One commenter asked why the refuge didn't address the issue of waterfowl numbers shifting to the west of Turnbull before devoting resources to a hunt.

Comments Received During the Hunt Plan/EA Comment Period

A 30 day public comment period was held. Notifications of the 30 day public comment period were published in the Spokesman Review and Cheney Free Press. 600 constituents were mailed a letter informing them about the hunt plan and EA and the 30 day comment period. A copy of the hunt plan and EA was made available for public review at the Refuge office, the Cheney Public Library, the downtown Spokane Library and on the Turnbull NWR website. Notification and copies were also sent to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Federal and state legislators and Spokane County Commissioners received letters informing them about the hunt plan and how they could access it to provide comments.

Comments are summarized in the final EA.

C. Hunter application and registration procedures

Special Permit Turnbull Refuge Elk Hunt Application Process

Hunters must purchase the required Washington State hunting license and select the transport tag that matches the tag specified for the hunt of interest listed in the special hunt tables. Read the current year Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet to see what special hunt choices are available. Hunters must select their transport tag, including weapon type and location, before they can purchase a special permit application.

The cost of a special permit application is \$5.48 for residents, \$54.75 for non-residents, and \$3.29 for youth. Applications are taken from mid May through Mid June. See the current year Big Game Regulations for specific dates.

Those successfully drawn for a permit will then be required to contact the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge to purchase the refuge hunting access permit and get their hunting unit assignment.

Special hunt applications can be purchased at license dealerships, or by calling WDFW at 1-866-246-9453, or online at www.fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov. Applications can only be submitted by calling 1-877-945-3492 or online at www.fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov. Paper documents are not accepted.

Special Permit Youth Waterfowl Hunt Application process

Refuge personnel will accept applications for a drawing of 6-8 special hunting access permits for each of the two days. Applications will be accepted at the Refuge from August 1-15. Youth will be selected through a random drawing and notified as soon as possible after the drawing. Youth may apply with a youth friend or youth sibling on the same application as 2 youths will be allowed per hunting site. Both youths names should be on the same application. Prior to the youth hunt weekend, Refuge staff will provide a hunting seminar in late August or early September for youth that covers waterfowl identification and natural history. This could be open to the general public with youth selected for the hunt having first priority. State law defines youth as less than 16 years of age.

Youth Hunters and their accompanying adult will be provided free Special Hunting Access Permit by the Refuge Manager to access the north side of Upper Turnbull Slough to specific stationary hunting points. Hunters will be spaced at least 300 yards apart. Hunting sites will be assigned by drawing. Youth hunter will be accompanied by an unarmed adult age 18 or older. The adult will be responsible for the actions of the youth. The hunting access permit will be issued to the adult accompanying the youth and will outline conditions of the hunt. There will be 5-6 hunting areas provided however constructing permanent blinds will be prohibited. Annual space available for this hunt will be determined by fall lake water levels.

D. Description of hunter selection process

Elk Hunt Special Permit Selection Process

This drawing is conducted by WDFW. Hunters will follow the permit application process outlined in the current Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations. A weighted-point permit drawing system is used, which gives applicants who have failed to be selected in the past a better chance to be awarded a permit in the future. It is based on the application history of each applicant. Each year, those who are not selected for a permit earn a point. Points accumulate in each species category. When a hunter is selected, the hunter's point total for that species drops to zero. Everyone has a chance to be selected, but those with more points have a better chance of being awarded a permit.

Youth Waterfowl Hunt Special Permit Selection process

There will be a public drawing conducted by FWS to select hunters for the 6-8 refuge hunting sites. Applicants will not have to be present at the drawing but are welcome to attend. Successfully drawn applicants will be notified within a week of the drawing. Permit holders will be provided orientation to the hunting sites and offered a waterfowl identification class.

E. Media selection for announcing and publicizing the hunt

Hunters will be notified of the Turnbull Refuge elk hunt through the annual Washington State

Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations. Press releases will be sent out by the U. S Fish and Wildlife Service to local newspapers (Spokesman Review and Cheney Free Press), radio and television stations, interested organizations and government leaders. The public will be able to contact the Refuge office for current specific regulations, hunting maps, and permit procedures. The public will be able to view the hunt plan, and hunt plan EA on the refuge's website along with any news releases regarding the hunts at <http://www.fws.gov/turnbull/>.

F. Description of hunter orientation, including pre-hunt scouting

Youth waterfowl hunters will be offered a waterfowl identification course prior to the hunt that would include a tour of the waterfowl hunting sites. This will involve looking at slides of waterfowl species and other marsh birds they might encounter in the hunt, the chance to look at taxidermy mounts and to spend some time in the field trying to identify ducks on the water and in the air.

If the interest is there, the FWS will consider having a refuge orientation day prior to the start of the first elk season for hunters wishing to get familiar with the area. Scouting will be allowed one day prior to each season opener.

G. Hunter Requirements

- (1) Age - All hunters, regardless of age, must have in their possession a valid Washington State hunting license and any required tags, permits or stamps to hunt wildlife. Youth under age 16 need a state hunting license but not a federal migratory waterfowl stamp. Youth are eligible for reduced license fees. On the Refuge any youth under age 16 will be required to have an accompanying adult.
- (2) Allowable equipment - Depending upon the season, elk hunters will be allowed to use modern firearm, muzzleloader, or archery consistent with WDFW regulations. Elk hunters will not be allowed to have dogs with them. With the exception of disabled hunters, elk hunters will not be allowed to take vehicles into the Refuge. Vehicles will be parked at designated parking areas. Waterfowl hunters will be allowed to use a shotgun no larger than 10 gauge. The shotgun can be capable of holding no more than three shells, Hunters must use lead free non-toxic shot. They are encouraged to use retrieval dogs. Waterfowl hunters will be allowed to drive to a post marking their hunting area, but will have to walk to designated hunt sites.
- (3) No camping or open fires are allowed on the Refuge.
- (4) License and permits - All hunters must have valid Washington State hunting licenses. Hunters will be required to have a State of Washington Big Game hunting license with an elk tag. Hunters will choose Eastern Washington and a Tag Area. Game Management Unit 130 is the unit in which Turnbull Refuge is located. Interested hunters must apply for a special permit and pay the current state fee. Those drawn for a special hunting permit for Turnbull Refuge will then contact the Refuge for their refuge hunting access permit.

Each successfully drawn permit applicant will pay a Refuge recreational access permit fee in addition to any license, tag, or permit fees required by WDFW. Refuge recreational access permit fees will help fund annual printing of hunter brochures, and support other hunt administrative costs. See Table 3 for the number of permits allowed.

The State will provide FWS a list of permitted hunters. The permitted hunter will need to contact the Refuge for a hunting access permit. The Refuge permit will give the hunter access to a specific area of the Refuge during the specific season for which the hunter was drawn. Along with the permit the hunter will be issued a 2"x 8" card that will be placed in a visible position on the dash of their vehicle which will state the year, the Refuge Access Permit #, WILDID, hunting method and designated hunting area.

A list of hunter names and WILD ID numbers, Refuge Access permit #, hunt season and hunt location will be maintained and accessible to the State and Refuge Law Enforcement officers and wildlife managers.

(5) Reporting Harvest – Hunters must fulfill all WDFW reporting requirements.

(6) Hunting training and safety – WFWD offers Hunter Education courses www.hunter-ed.com/wa and www.bowhunter-ed.com/wa . They also have a Master Hunter Program. Information on the Master Hunter Program can be found at www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/masterhunter . The FWS will offer an annual waterfowl identification course for youth hunters or anyone else that would like to attend.

DRAFT Refuge-Specific Regulations for Turnbull NWR Youth Waterfowl and Elk Hunts

- A. Migratory Game Bird Hunting. We allow hunting of waterfowl within 50 yards of hunting sites designated by the refuge manager on the north side of Upper Turnbull Slough in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:
1. We only allow waterfowl (ducks, geese, coot) hunting during the State's Youth Migratory Bird Hunt.
 2. We prohibit the use of motorized boats.
 3. We prohibit the construction or use of permanent blinds, pit blinds, stands, or scaffolds.
 4. We only allow authorized vehicles on designated routes of travel and require hunters to park in designated parking areas. No ATVs or ORVs are allowed.
 5. Hunters may possess or use no more than 25 non-toxic shotshells per hunter each day while in the field.
 6. We prohibit shooting or discharging any firearm from, across, or along a public highway, designated route of travel, road, road shoulder, road embankment, or designated parking area.
 7. We allow hunter access from two hours before sunrise to one hour after sunset.
 8. Hunters must possess a non-transferable Refuge special access permit that names hunters and their hunt partners and accompanying adult.

- B. Big Game Hunting. We allow hunting of elk on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:

We conduct the refuge hunt by State permit only. We require hunters to possess and carry current Washington State elk licenses, valid for the refuge hunt unit and a refuge special access permit.

1. We only allow authorized vehicles on designated routes of travel and require hunters to park in designated parking areas. No ATVs or ORVs are allowed.
2. Only special permit holders for disabled hunts will be allowed authorized vehicular access to their hunt unit. We require all other hunters to park in designated parking areas.
3. We allow access from 2 hours before sunrise to 5 hours after sunset. Hunters needing additional time for retrieval must notify Refuge staff or a state fish and Wildlife Officer prior to the time extension.
4. Possession of loaded firearms or a bow with the arrow notched within any safety zone or closed area is prohibited.
5. Safety zones of 500 feet are in effect around existing structures. We prohibit shooting from or into any safety zone or Closed Area.
6. One weaponless person may assist hunters during elk retrieval only. This person is required to remain with the Hunter at all times during retrieval.
7. All hunters/helpers are required to possess a non-transferable Refuge special access permit.
8. Hunters who wound an elk that moves outside the hunt unit must be accompanied by Refuge staff or by a state Fish and Wildlife Officer during retrieval in Closed Areas.

9. Hunters must use non-toxic ammunition or remove the digestive tract remains of harvested animals.